

Adapting TQM as an Organizational Development Tool for the Jail

CITY OF ATLANTA

Mayor William (Bill) Campbell in 1995 announced a mandate to create a culture of "quality" within city government through the implementation of Quality Service Improvement (QSI), an adapted model of Total Quality Management (TQM). This article chronicles the success of the Atlanta Department of Corrections (DOC) in implementing organizational development under the theme of "Quality Within Atlanta City Government."

TQM was originally developed by an American statistician, W. Edwards Deming, but his approaches were "adopted much more enthusiastically in post-World War II Japan than in his native country" (Swiss, 1992). When Japanese products such as electronics and automobiles began to outperform and outsell American products, the U.S. business sector started to re-emphasize quality by borrowing some of the Japanese techniques. The term TQM is a collective term for many management approaches that have been synthesized into one philosophy of results-oriented management.

Local governments in the United States are confronted with the same challenges that have led the private sector to adopt TQM programs, or hybrids thereof, as more informed citizens demand better services.

TQM challenges traditional administrative systems that are "management-centered" (designed to control rather than empower) and aim to provide uniform services rather than adaptability.

The City of Atlanta DOC has applied the concepts of TQM loosely, incorporating various management systems or approaches that support the TQM philosophy while also maintaining practicality for a city corrections department. That is, the department does not strictly follow the orthodox concepts created by Deming, which were initially introduced for private, assembly line, industrial-oriented business (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993). A review of TQM literature supports a modified approach for public sector agencies; some critics argue that, to succeed, TQM has to be substantially modified to fit the public sector's unique characteristics.

Introducing management change efforts such as TQM into the public sector is not easy. The barriers to successful implementation are numerous because of the complex public environment and its personnel systems, including civil service protections that make it difficult to

fire a government employee. Not only must a public manager confront the complexities of the personnel system, but he/she must also learn to adapt to the inevitable shifts in mandates that result from changes in political administrations and from competing expectations of diverse constituents.

QSI IMPLEMENTATION

citywide depended critically on commitment and leadership from top appointed and elected officials. In 1995, Byron Marshall, the (now former) chief operating officer for the City of Atlanta, was one of the key proponents of this quality-driven culture initiative. He had served as the city manager in Austin, Texas, where the city administration had successfully implemented the TQM model. Atlanta's mayor was also dedicated to implementing this initiative in Atlanta city government.

For implementation to succeed, senior managers should be trained in the "quality" philosophy and must ensure that training cascades down to all levels of staff. In Atlanta city government, for example, changing management behavior was the first step in the city's process of implementing QSI. The mayor's cabinet members

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and senior level executives were the first to be trained in the concepts of QSI. The training emphasized paradigm shifts and customer-centered, as opposed to management-centered, approaches to organizational processes. In Atlanta Corrections, the department head, Chief Thomas (Tom) Pocock, personally gives a QSI orientation to all new employees of the agency.

Mid-level managers of Atlanta city departments were selected to be QSI leaders and were trained in facilitation skills. The training consisted of certification in Business Process Improvement methodologies, which include analyzing problems, flow-charting, improving group dynamics, and making meetings work. In order for successful change to take place under the QSI concept, a facilitator must lead teams to achieve productive outputs by using the synergy of group ideas, while remaining a neutral party.

ONCE A COMMITMENT to TQM is widely accepted by top leaders, adapting TQM to the endemically different culture and characteristics of government becomes the next challenge. This requires organizational vision.

In October 1998 Chief Pocock, a staunch advocate of QSI, appointed me to the then-vacant position of Deputy Chief of the detention division, which consisted of the main 1,300-bed detention facility and the hospital and court detention centers. In my previous role as QSI coordinator, I had reported directly to Chief

Pocock, who acted as the department's QSI champion. Our working relationship strengthened through our shared goal of creating organizational development under the philosophy of "quality in the organization."

The time had come for a fresh, new, and energetic start. With our shared commitment to quality and our background and training in TQM, we were ready for a new vision. Although Chief Pocock had earned a strong reputation as a polished and adept administrator, he expressed a desire to leave behind a legacy of excellence. By honoring the past but thinking in the future tense, he had already begun this legacy in 1995 by building a "new age" direct supervision facility. Although challenged with inmate crowding and tight budget constraints, he saw these challenges as opportunities to succeed.

Chief Pocock gave me the following vision: "To create the highest performing agency possible by implementing performance measures, inmate programs, personnel efficiencies, new technologies and quality customer service in order to become recognized nationally and internationally as one of the top-rated jails in the country by recognized industry standards and publications."

We communicated this vision to all staff through weekly bulletins, employee training sessions, and speeches to new hires as well as to external stakeholders.

A HYBRID VERSION OF TQM was adapted in Atlanta Corrections. A detention division management team was formed to undertake the process, comprised of current and new staff who shared the vision of the chief. That team undertook a series of steps to bring TQM into the daily functioning of the agency.

STEP 1.
Priority
Setting

Based on varying levels of organizational concerns, the management team surveyed staff by holding "town hall meetings," having informal discussions, and forming core teams, always including labor union representatives, to identify major problems. Staff were identified as internal customers to address morale issues. In the management team meeting, each member brainstormed all problem areas, using the "divergent/convergent" method, which moves from broad problems to specifics.

At this point, a root cause analysis was conducted to ensure we were not addressing symptoms of problems, but actual problems. Once root causes were discerned, addressing these problems became the management team's priorities for the year. The priorities were categorized into functional areas of the organization: administration, housing, operations, and security.

**STEP 2.
Reviewing
Organizational
Structure**

A review of the organizational structure was done to ensure that priorities were addressed in formalized processes by being assigned to the appropriate units or sections. The organizational chart was customized to meet the priorities, with each team member responsible for a unit and a set of priorities.

**STEP 3.
Team
Building**

A team concept was emphasized, with each unit providing support and cooperation to the others. A ground rule of consensus and respect was established. Weekly meetings that allowed each member to vent and participate in a safe environment were facilitated through skills acquired from QSI facilitation training in "group dynamics" and "making meetings work."

**STEP 4.
Goal Setting**

The management team set goals for each set of priorities, ensuring that goal statements were directly linked to the vision and met the criteria of being attainable, measurable, and observable. Goal statements also had to be specific, be time-bounded, use action language, and be results-oriented.

Chief Pocock emphasized the management approach of incre-

mentalism, of setting objectives in phases or steps and building from small successes. With this approach, if a mistake were made, it would be a small mistake that would allow for mid-term corrections. In addition, this approach resulted in short-term accomplishments that could be reported back to the rank and file. Incrementalism is an especially good tool to use for citing progress to those who are resistant to change.

Goals for the year 2000 were to:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of overtime management.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of inmate housing.
- Increase safety and operational efficiency of the intake process.
- Enhance emergency preparedness in detention facilities.
- Upgrade operational safety and sanitation in the Atlanta City Detention Facility.
- Improve and expand the Corrections Emergency Response and Tactics team.
- Enhance management systems by implementing technology, performance management, and division of labor.

**STEP 5.
Strategic
Planning**

Once the goals were set, the management team developed implementation plans for each goal. These plans became projects for each assigned team member and served as road maps to implementing the goals. Each implementation plan was formatted in a Gantt chart using Microsoft Project™ software. The implementation plans included time-lines, start dates, due dates, linked tasks, resources, and percentages of completion. Under each goal the priorities appeared in outline form, listing each step or task needed to accomplish the objectives in meeting the goal.

The management team met each week to discuss progress, obstacles, or the need for additional help on issues arising in their respective units or sections. A weekly status update was maintained, and each needed task was documented, including the team member(s) accountable for the task and its due date. Each team member became accountable to others in the meetings using this management-by-objectives approach. Team members reported monthly on the status of their projects to the rank and file.

PETER DRUCKER, ONE of the founding fathers of public administration, once said, "What doesn't get measured, doesn't get done." Therefore, once the goals and timelines were set, results-oriented output variables had to be determined to measure progress toward

meeting the goals. It was important to keep this process simple, by limiting desired outcomes to no more than five items per goal and developing performance indicators and performance targets for each desired outcome.

Microsoft Excel™ software was used to create performance measurement charts that provided useful information to monitor and track organizational performance on a quarterly basis. These measurement charts also serve as great tools for identifying organizational strengths and weaknesses.

To ensure valid data reporting, tools such as spreadsheets and simple-to-use forms were designed to facilitate the collection and tracking of data. Internal auditing was done routinely to identify misreporting or weaknesses in data processing.

SUCSESSES WERE

recognized and rewarded. The detention division realized most of the goals that had been set, except those precluded by budgetary constraints. The numbers were impressive, and results were highly visible.

To name just a few accomplishments:

- Inmate discipline improved by 80%.
- Overtime was reduced by 10%.
- All the housing units were renovated.
- Staff morale increased.

- The cleanliness of the jail rivals most hospitals. Some officers were coming in 2 hours early just to ensure their floors were buffed in the pods.

- Articles about the jail were featured in national trade publications.

- Jails from around the country visited our facility for benchmarking of best practices.

Chief Pocock issued certificates of achievement to all members of the management team, and a luncheon was given in recognition of their success.

Clearly, organizational development under the overall philosophy of quality produced tangible results in the City of Atlanta Department of Corrections. The TQM/QSI performance management approach is now being implemented throughout the entire department for 2001. ■

References

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